



# DOMINGUEZ-ESCALANTE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

## DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

---



### ❖ WILDERNESS MANAGEMENT ❖

The Dominguez Canyon Wilderness consists of 66,280 acres in the heart of the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (D-E NCA) and is managed in accordance with the 1964 Wilderness Act.

#### What is wilderness?

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-577) defined wilderness as follows:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

#### Why is wilderness important?

In the 1964 Wilderness Act, Congress gave the following reason for preserving certain areas of public land as wilderness areas:

In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.

#### How do we measure the “wild” in wilderness?

- *Untrammeled*—measured by the extent of human manipulation of the area’s natural processes. For example, spraying noxious weeds inside a wilderness would be considered trammeling.
- *Undeveloped*—measured by the amount of man-made structures that are inside the wilderness (e.g., fences, stock ponds, trails), the amount of livestock grazing, and the number of authorized or unauthorized uses of motorized vehicles or equipment.
- *Naturalness*—measured by the ecological health of the biological resources that occur inside the wilderness (e.g., vegetation, water, and wildlife).
- *Solitude*—measured by the number of visitors inside the wilderness and the proximity of the sights and sounds of other uses to different areas of the wilderness.
- *Unconfined recreation*—measured by the extent of management restrictions that apply to the wilderness (e.g., no-camping areas, campfire restrictions, target shooting restrictions).
- *Unique and supplemental values*—measured by the extent and condition of the cultural resources and threatened and endangered species.

Wilderness management often requires tradeoffs between these different values. For example, spraying weeds might *trammel* the wilderness, but the tradeoff is an improvement of *naturalness*.

**Alternative A (No Action):** Under this alternative, there would be no emphasis on any of the wilderness qualities. Management decisions that require tradeoffs between the different wilderness values would be made on a case-by-case basis, with no guidance for prioritizing one quality over another.

**Alternative B:** Under this alternative, all areas of the wilderness would be managed the same way. Management would emphasize protection and restoration of the untrammeled quality and opportunities for unconfined recreation.

**Alternative C:** Under this alternative, all areas of the wilderness would be managed the same way. Management would emphasize protection and restoration of the supplemental values, naturalness, and opportunities for solitude.

**Alternative D:** Under this alternative, the wilderness would be managed in three different zones: Zone 1 (lower Big and Little Dominguez Canyons) would emphasize protection and restoration of the supplemental values (cultural resources and threatened and endangered species); Zone 2 (Horse Mesa, Triangle Mesa, Star Mesa, and upper Big and Little Dominguez Canyons) would emphasize protection and restoration of the undeveloped nature and opportunities for solitude; and Zone 3 (the southeastern portion of the Wilderness) would emphasize protection and restoration of naturalness and opportunities for unconfined recreation.

**Alternative E:** This alternative is similar to Alternative D. Under this alternative, the wilderness would also be managed in three different zones, in the same geographical areas as described above: Zone 1 would emphasize protection and restoration of the supplemental values (cultural resources and threatened and endangered species) and naturalness; Zone 2 would emphasize protection and restoration of naturalness and opportunities for solitude; and Zone 3 would emphasize protection and restoration of naturalness and opportunities for unconfined recreation.

**Where in the draft RMP can I find more information about wilderness management in the D-E NCA?**

- Chapter 2 (“Alternatives”) describes wilderness management for each alternative; the Alternatives Matrix describes wilderness management decisions, starting on page 95 of Chapter 2.
- Chapter 4 (“Environmental Consequences”), starting on page 363, describes impacts from management of the Wilderness.

**Questions to consider when commenting on proposed decisions regarding wilderness management:**

- Which alternative would best protect the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness? Why?
- Is there an alternative that was not considered? What would that alternative look like?
- Were all the impacts to wilderness considered? If not, what other impacts should be considered?